

Hayward schools would benefit under state aid proposal

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The Hayward Community School District would stand to gain roughly \$1,716,000 in state equalization aid under a new formula proposed this week by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Evers.

Hayward District Administrator Michael Cox informed the Board of Education Monday that Evers' "Fair Funding for Our Future" proposal is "one of the best ideas I've seen for years to change the way schools are funded in the state."

Evers asks the Legislature to guarantee a minimum of 3,000 in general school aid for each student in 2012-123. It includes a weighting factor for the number of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (approximately 55 percent in the Hayward district). Also that year, the school levy tax credit and first dollar credit would be folded into general state aid, ensuring that state education dollars are directly spent on educating children.

Evers said the plan would "hold the line on property taxes" by providing additional state resources for schools and by maintaining current revenue limits.

The plan also ensures that no district loses more than 10 percent of its state aid in a single year and makes changes that support declining enrollment and negatively aided districts. For future budget years, "Fair Funding for Our Future" helps local communities and school districts plan and budget by proposing a predictable increase of 2 percent or a rate equal to the Consumer Price Index in state support for schools, whichever is higher.

Cox said the current "antiquated formula" based on high property values in the Hayward district means "we get very little state aid. It assumes that wealth comes from ownership of property. We all know that's not exactly true."

Last year, the Hayward district received \$848,432 in state equalization aid, plus tax credits of \$3,101,000 and high poverty aid of \$205,000. Under the new proposal, "we would receive about \$1,716,000 more" than currently, Cox said. "That would allow us to decrease property taxes by that amount."

Paul Coenen and John Becker reported that school staff members attended a Wisconsin Schools of Promise recognition ceremony in Madison on Oct. 18, where the Stone Lake Elementary School received the award for the eighth consecutive year, a fact that drew applause from the audience. Hayward High School also received the award.

Each school received \$2,000 to use as they choose, plus a plaque to display.

High School Principal Steve Dvorak distributed a report on Hayward student dropout rates and

academic performance from the state Department of Public instruction (DPI) in response to data cited last month by proponents of an environmental charter school in Hayward.

The DPI reports “refute some of the data that was in that proposal,” Dvorak said. The charter school proponents said recent trends include fewer students graduating from high school here, especially males, where one of every six is said to be dropping out; fewer students are taking the American College Test (ACT), and there is decreasing language skills among boys and decreasing science and math skills among girls.

In fact, Dvorak said, the one-in-six statistic cited is “totally incorrect.” The DPI defines a dropout as a student who starts school “and never completes anything. They don’t come to school anymore at age 18 or earlier and we never see them again. Our dropout rate for males in 2008-09 was at most 3.52 percent.

“There’s a difference between a noncompleter (one who does not graduate with his cohorts in June) and a dropout,” Dvorak added.

Dvorak also said that 41 of 75 students in the pre-calculus class at HHS this year are female and 17 of 32 in calculus are girls. In four out of the past five years, the top math senior was a girl and the fifth year there was a tie between a boy and a girl.

Dvorak added that he feels some parts of the charter school data “were an attack on the integrity of the students, the faculty and administration.”

In other action, the board:

- Approved the fifth biennial Hayward Middle School 7th and 8th grade trip to Washington D.C. and New York City in August, 2012.
- Approved a bid of \$4,467 plus \$790 for an electronic buzzer from Glassworks to install security doors at the Intermediate School;
- Tabled a proposed change in the status of the Hayward Center for Individualized Learning (HACIL) charter school to a virtual school, as recommended by the Department of Public instruction.
- Approved Brittany Roberts as grant writer to apply for a state planning grant for the Hayward Environmental Charter School (HECS). If the grant is approved, she would be hired as the school’s teacher.
- Approved a charter school establishment procedure.
- Approved a records retention policy.

- Appointed Don Semler as the board's delegate to the annual convention of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards in January.

Supt. Cox reported that the district received a Title 1A supplemental grant of \$60,000 to purchase technology equipment for the middle school.

Also, the district received a state grant of \$10,950 to assist homeless students.

The board accepted several donations to the district: Three collectable chess sets from Jody and Wendy Blum, owners of J.C. Moon; \$600 worth of clothing from the Spider Lake Church Women's Group for students in need; backpacks, books and food from Feed the Children of Oklahoma City for the weekend backpack food program for students, which is run by the Hayward Community Food Shelf; two boxes of school supplies for the primary school from Curves of Hayward; and \$47.28 from Pel Industries, representing an 8 percent royalty on the net sales price of school apparel and headwear made by Pel.

It was noted that two Board of Education members will be up for election this coming spring: Dr. Harry Malcolm and Douglas Mrotek. Individuals who intend to run for election can sign up at the central office prior to Jan. 4.

Group home

Jon and Wanda Denzer, residents on Greenwood Lane near the high school, spoke to the board about Sawyer County's search for a juvenile group home. The county Health & Human Services Department was considering the purchase of two buildings directly across from the high school for a residence and day treatment center for five juveniles. But now the department has been directed to look at alternate sites.

Armstrong said she was informed that there would be no sex offenders housed at the facility. The occupants would be continually supervised and escorted to and from school each day — whether that be in Hayward or at LCO or Winter.

The reason the county is looking to have a juvenile group home in this area is they can't find foster parents/homes for these kids, Armstrong said. Currently the county is shipping them to Eau Claire, where they are placed in Northwest Passage homes.

The county's thought is to bring the kids back into the community, let them attend school every day, and work with their families to give the youths the treatment they need, Armstrong said.